Millis Once Famous For Bell Industry

Milford Daily News Apr. 23, 1976

By HENRY DOYLE

MILLIS — When a hugh, 600 pound bronze bell is dedicated on July 4th to the town of Millis by the Bicentennial Commission it will not only serve as a lasting memorial of the town's observance of the nation's 200th birthday but will be a reminder of an industry that flourished here in the early days of the republic.

The bell, obtained from Howard Payson of 22 Causeway Street, one of the town's oldest residents, was cast in a foundry that was on a site at the southwest corner of present Main and Spring Streets.

It is one of the Holbrook bells. George Holbrook cast the first bell, in Millis, then known as East Medway in 1816, in rear of a building at 1031 Main Street long known as The Elms and occupied for years by the late George Payson. The foundry was then constructed across the street.

The Holbrook bell being dedicated this July was cast in 1832 and for years peeled forth from a church in Connecticut. When the steeple toppled in the 1938 hurricane the bell was purchased by Howard Payson and has been on his property since.

Another Holbrook bell still peels forth from the steeple of Church Street where is was placed in 1885. In recounting the stories he has heard of the famous bells, Mr. Payson stated that six peel forth at the famous Monastary of San Juan Capistrano, another has been seen by residents traveling south on the grounds of Chapel Hill, No. Carolina. Holbrook bells were shipped to many places throughout the world.

It is said that George Holbrook was with Paul Revere in Boston.

It is said that George Holbrook first became with the bell industry when he was with Paul Revere when the famous patriot cast his first bell in 1789. Holbrook then went to North Brookfield, with Revere's son to establish a foundry and came to Millis 1816.

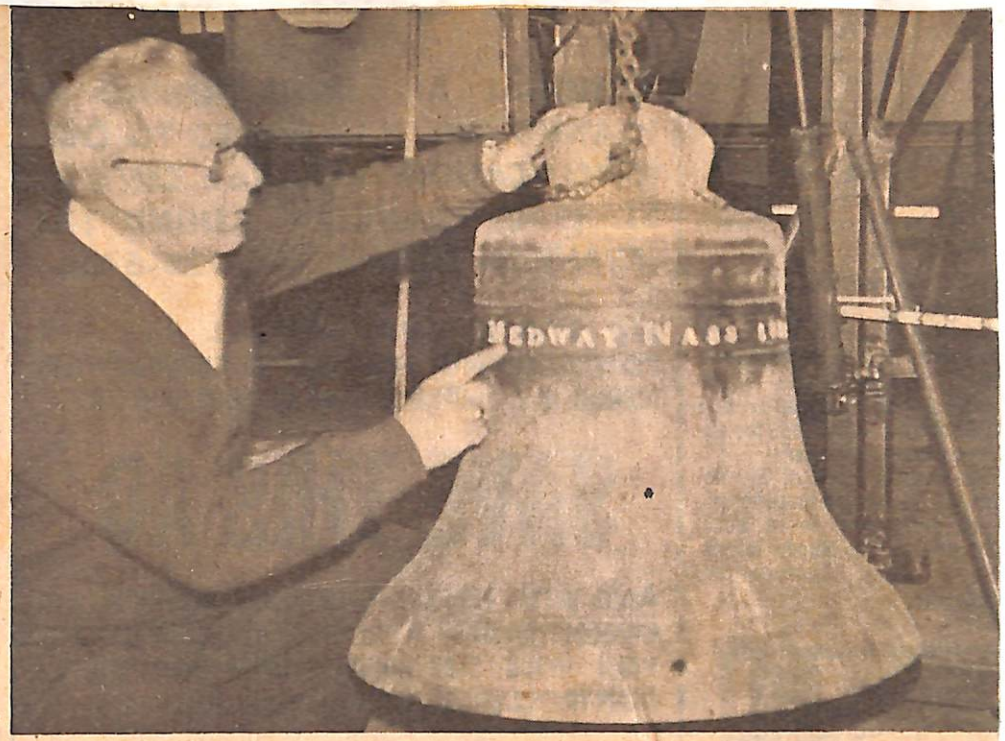
For four generations the Holbrooks carried on their work here casting not only bells but constructing organs at the building now located at the northwest corner of Main Street and Auburn Road.

The musical talent and genius of the Holbrooks enabled their bells to have a unique and beautiful sound.

Millis residents will have an opportunity to hear this sound at 2 p.m. Fourth of July, when it will peel forth joining bells throughout the United Nations in the national observance of the Bicentennial.

Holbrook bell is shown in the steeple of Church of Christ where it was placed in 1855 and cast in foundry here. (Photos by Henry Doyle)

Medway
East Medway
HOLBROOK



The "M" in Mass on this bell is upside down. There is no explanation for the way it was cast. D.P.W. superintendent Richard Barrett is inspecting the 1831 bell.